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INFORMATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This Appendix contains information on the work of a Zampolit (Political Officer) and on morale and reactions to political events among Soviet troops in Germany during the 1952-1953 period.

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2. Work as a ZAMPOLIT

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The political talks [] were quite formal, and gave rise to no particular discussion. Sometimes, however, some [] listeners, the great majority of whom were peasants, would contrive to slip in a remark which showed very clearly what they were thinking. For example, in a talk on the developments within the Soviet Union, explaining party theory on transition from socialism to communism or the like, one soldier would interrupt with the question, "and why is there so little bread in the villages"? This would have to be dealt with, in most cases by explaining sternly that the question had nothing to do with the subject under discussion. []

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3. Reactions among Soviet troops to recent events

(a) The Doctors' Plot. The arrest of the doctors seems to have produced an immediate anti-semitic reaction [redacted]

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[redacted] The reaction when the doctors were rehabilitated was quite different. This decision was treated with a certain amount of contempt because it seemed to bring the whole system into disrepute. [redacted]

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(b) Death of Stalin. The death of STALIN and his illness became known through broadcasts. [redacted]

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[redacted] When the death was announced there was no excitement of any kind, no special meetings, and no directives [redacted]

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[redacted] It is no one can live forever death was something that came to everyone and had therefore to be accepted. [redacted]

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[redacted] The appointment of MALENKOV as Prime Minister came as a great surprise because everyone had expected it to be MOLOTOV. The appointment of BUCARIN aroused no particular feelings [redacted] although BUCARIN is a civilian in uniform he had been Defence Minister before, and it was natural that he should become it again. The appointment of ZHUKOV, on the other hand, was received with obvious pleasure. ZHUKOV is still a very popular figure among soldiers [redacted]

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[redacted] the portrait had not disappeared, but that as ZHUKOV was no longer actively concerned with military affairs in Germany there was no particular reason to display his portrait. [redacted]

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(c) The Events of 17 June 1953 in Eastern Germany. [redacted] the anti-Communist riots of June 1953 affected [redacted] the STAAKEN Garrison only to a limited extent. Troops were alerted on 17 June 1953 and the state of emergency lasted until 29 June [redacted]

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[redacted] Sentries and patrols were reinforced and all leave was cancelled. Leave for all officers, in particular for sub-unit commanders, had already been limited from 1 June until 31 August 1953. It was officially explained that these leave restrictions were connected with the summer training period. [redacted]

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[redacted] the anti-Communist riots were directed not against the Russians but against the Communist German Government. The Germans were friendly towards the Russian troops all the time. There were no hostile activities against Soviet personnel, and the Russian soldiers observed the unusual situation with typically Russian indifference. Apparently the Army Group H.Q. did not expect trouble from the Germans because all precautions

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were taken in order to prevent an "attack from the West".

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"Everyone" (in the Soviet Army) believed that the whole affair was prepared in the West and directed by Western agents. The Russians considered the Germans unable to organize anything serious without foreign help, and the attitude of the German population towards Russians during the riots justified this opinion. On the other hand the Russian officers were rather impressed by the unexpected scale of the riots.

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Instructions given by the 24 Air Army Political Branch also made clear that troops ought to understand that the action had been organized in the West and was a typical example of a hostile Western provocation.

Later on, when all was over, the political officers were instructed "to confess" in the POLITENORMATSIYA lectures that the German government had gone too far in their economic and political policy (PRAVITELSTVO PEREGULOV NEMTSAMI) and that changes in the method of introduction of the German Communist economic policy were necessary. This explanation did not impress the indifferent mass of Soviet O.Rs, but the officers came to the conclusion that a "NEP" would be introduced in the Eastern Zone of Germany, as was done in the U.S.S.R. after the 1917-1921 period.

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(d) Anti-Soviet feeling in Poland. Information about Poland usually reaches the Soviet troops in Germany through Soviet personnel returning via Poland from leave in Russia. There were no reports of any anti-Soviet riots in connection with the events in Eastern Germany.

the Soviet personnel in Germany consider the political atmosphere to be much worse in Poland (as far as anti-Soviet feeling is concerned) than in Germany.

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The latest news to reach the Soviet officers in the STARKEN area was of an attempt to wreck a Soviet transit train in 1955. Personnel returning from leave spread a story that in April or early May 1955 a Soviet train was derailed between WARSAW and the Soviet frontier. It was rumoured that the Poles had been trying to kill Col. Gen. SHEPILENKO, who was on his way from MOSCOW to BERLIN. Gen. SHEPILENKO avoided the crash because he left MOSCOW one day later than had been planned. There were very few casualties in the wrecked train. Soviet personnel proceeding to or from Russia did not feel very safe on Polish territory. the officers in Germany "know" that Marshal ROGOZHNEV spends a couple of months each year in Russia recovering from attempts on his life.

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(e) The Amnesty. the Amnesty caused little comment among Soviet forces in Germany. The Army authorities stressed the importance of the amnesty, and political personnel were instructed to make as much propaganda as possible about it. Special placards with the text of the amnesty were distributed to all units. In special lectures the Zampolits stressed how just the Party was. Among the officers the amnesty gave rise to some sarcastic remarks e.g. that the rate of criminal offences would rise when people from the camps and prisons started their "new life". This opinion appeared to be justified when arrivals from the Soviet Union after the Amnesty started to talk about a new wave of crimes committed by people released from prisons and corrective labour camps.

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(f) The Arrest of BERIA. The announcement of the removal of BERIA reached [] by way of the wireless. There were no special meetings, no special directives, and no advance information on the subject, nor had there been any changes of any kind []

[] The information was passed on to the troops in the ordinary way in accordance with the official version - that it was "the best example of the spirit of justice which reigns inside the Party..." - and did not appear to cause any particular excitement. []

[] there had been traitors discovered in the U.S.S.R. in the past and no doubt there would be in the future. When it was suggested [] it was a little peculiar that No.2 in the Cabinet, who had been an active Bolshevik all his life, should be suddenly stated to be a traitor and to have been an agent of the imperialists for years, and thus on the word of his Cabinet colleagues without BERIA being given any opportunity to say a word in his defence, and without any evidence being produced, []

[]

[]

[]

[] party meetings to be convened first at the higher levels and then down to the lower levels at intervals of a few days. Thus on the Wednesday after the announcement of the fall of BERIA a divisional party meeting was held, the agenda having already been prepared at Corps level and with a Corps party representative in attendance. On the Friday a Battalion party meeting was to have been held with a fixed agenda prepared by Division ----- []

[]

4. Criminal Offences.

[] at least 10-15% of the Soviet Armed Forces O.Rs. in Germany and in the Union are in prison. This estimate is based on [] experience with the KONTRAZVEDKA. In Germany [] the percentage of sentences is even higher than in the U.S.S.R.

[]

[]

[] the NEURUPPIN camp is always overcrowded in spite of the fact that they never keep customers longer than two or three days. Every day a special railway truck leaves the main transit camp full of soldiers under sentence, who are usually sent under escort of special troops, in one of the Russia-bound transit trains.

The main offences are drunkenness, contact with German women, assaults on women, breaches of discipline, theft etc.

[] Komsomol members are much less disciplined than non-Party soldiers. In 454 Air Maintenance Battalion, which

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consisted mainly of peasants who were, on the whole, easier to discipline than townsfolk, the 33 Party members and the 200 or so Komsomol members normally supplied more than 90% of defaulters. The remaining 120 non-Party soldiers were in general the best-disciplined group in the battalion.

[redacted] officers cannot stand life in the Army Group in Germany. Their standard of civilisation is not very high; their interests are limited. In Russia the greater part of them spend their off duty time drinking or amusing themselves with women. In Germany they are confined to barracks, drinking is forbidden, any contact with German women is considered a crime. The Russian women sent to the Army Group are not very numerous and are in general disliked by their countrymen. Officers therefore drink illegally and heavily, look for German women, whom they often assault, and many of them ultimately get bored to death, tired of constant supervision and restrictions, and commit suicide. The usual seasons for officers' suicide attempts are the May and November festivities. Every year the same story repeats itself. The Army Commanders organise conferences for senior officers, order special precautions, patrols and checks, mobilise the political personnel instructing them to increase "vigilance": and the results are exactly the same as they were in previous years. In 24 Air Army alone, during the three days of the 1952 November festivities, eight officers, all of them young men, committed suicide. In November 1951 one young officer shot dead three of his fellow officers and committed suicide. It was "an officers' bottle party". There were also cases when officers, caught by the patrols with German women, fought desperately and used their firearms. In November 1951 a young officer caught by the patrol and apparently afraid of the consequences, killed the German woman and committed suicide before the men of the patrol had time to disarm him.

Assault on women appears, [redacted] to be a "tradition" in the Soviet Armed Forces. [redacted] several examples of officers' "affairs" which were published in Army orders. In spring 1952 an Artillery Captain raped a 13 year-old German girl and was sentenced to eighteen years' imprisonment. In early July, 1953 two captains from units of 37 Air Technical Division gave a lift to two German women. They attempted to rape them in the truck but the women resisted fiercely. The officers shot both women dead and left the bodies on the road. They were sentenced to eight years in corrective labour camps.

5. Women Serving in the Army Group in Germany

[redacted] the idea of sending Russian women to the Army Group in Germany in order to prevent officers and O.Rs. from being demoralised by German women has not proved very successful in practice. The majority of the Russian women engaged for service in Germany, both military personnel and civilian employees, are of a very low standard in all respects and are very unpopular among the male personnel. They are generally rude, ill-mannered, tactless and very ambitious. All these typists, waitresses, cleaners, cooks, etc., demonstrate their dislike of O.Rs. and seek for a friendship with officers and if possible with the senior officers. The very few women officers generally behave decently. Most of the women are, however, undisciplined; they drink heavily and their language is often enriched with the choicest specimens of the Russian "special" vocabulary. On the other hand they cannot be punished like the male soldiers, and commanders are often helpless and do their best to get rid of them as soon as possible. The position is much better in Army or Group Hqs., where the female personnel is specially selected; but in the units they are often unbearable. There were cases when a unit commander discovered a "private party" of naked women and officers completely drunk in the officers' quarters.

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There is in FRANKFURT/ODER a transit camp for women arriving from or returning to Russia. At one time there were 800 pregnant service girls awaiting transport to the Soviet Union.

[redacted] O.Rs. hate and despise the female service personnel. They are offended by the attitude and behaviour of the girls and they demonstrate their hatred in exactly the same way as the girls demonstrate their dislike of the O.Rs. All attempts by commanders and political officers to improve this unhealthy atmosphere have failed.

[redacted] the higher authorities realised that the whole affair was a failure, and that this was probably the reason why new replacements due to arrive in Germany in 1953 did not arrive and the number of women in the Army Group decreased considerably.

6. Morale of troops in Germany and in Russia

[redacted] about the morale of the Soviet Forces in Germany and at home. [redacted] the usual stories about lack of confidence as between officers and O.Rs. the wrong attitude of the higher authorities towards the masses of serving personnel, severe punishments, political supervision, etc. But in spite of all this [redacted] in the event of war Soviet officers and O.Rs., would fight well. In particular the troops in Germany would fight, because war would mean for them the end of barrack discipline and spocial regulations. They would have excitement, spirits, women and "trophies".

[redacted] Russian soldiers are well trained, they trust their weapons and they believe that there would be no shortage of equipment as was the case in the disastrous retreat of 1941. For a long time Soviet officers were afraid of atomic weapons, H bombs etc. At present they feel much better, believing that the Soviet Union is also in possession of these powerful weapons. Hence the popular slogan "1941 will never be repeated again" and the offensive spirit easily noticeable in all tactical lectures and conferences. [redacted] in spite of political "peace loving" speeches and friendly suggestions, a hostile attitude towards the West is still cultivated in the Armed Forces.

7. Defections

There were no defections from any units [redacted] nor was there any official instruction on the subject or discussion of it with the troops. [redacted] only one instance in which an order had come through about a defector: in this case a man from another unit, who had been apprehended owing to the vigilance of a soldier [redacted] The order, which was shown to all Zampolits of the battalion, stated that the soldier concerned was to be commended for his exemplary conduct and that the defector had been handed over for trial to a military tribunal. This order was read out on parade, and although the order said nothing of the sentence which had been passed, rumour very soon reported that the man had been sentenced to 25 years.

[redacted] the defector situation because of gossip with the frontier guards who were guarding the boundary between the Russian zone [redacted] at STAAKEN. These frontier guards were not M.V.D. troops, but ordinary infantry. They were under the command of the BERLIN Komandatura, and had free access in their own transport to BERLIN. These troops talked freely [redacted]

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[redacted] defections were quite frequent and that there had been only one instance in which [redacted] had handed a defector back. Some defectors had broadcast from the other side; [redacted]

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[redacted] In another case a senior sergeant had actually been seen by the frontier guards on the other side. [redacted]

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Absence for more than two hours required immediate notification to the battalion, while in the event of absence for more than 24 hours the division had to be alerted, and there were also standing orders dealing with search parties, frontier warnings, and so forth.

C. Leaflets

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[redacted] At STALLEN there were four occasions when leaflets were dropped by balloon. On each occasion there had been an immediate alarm (most, if not all of the "raids" occurred in the small hours of the morning) and the leaflets were promptly gathered up under the direction of the battalion Zampolit and all burnt on the spot, with the exception of one copy of each leaflet which was attached to the report sent by the battalion Zampolit to Brigade H.Q.

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[redacted] (From his description of the leaflets they were of NTS origin.) [redacted]

[redacted] When asked if there were any instructions to discuss leaflets with the troops in order to answer any criticism of the regime which they might contain. [redacted]

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9. Broadcasts

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It was not easy to hear because of the jamming, and as they were separated from their neighbours in the barracks only by a ply-wood door, it was often not possible to increase the volume sufficiently to make the words audible.

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